

GOVERNMENT BY AND FOR MILLENNIAL AMERICA



AN INITIATIVE OF THE
ROOSEVELT CAMPUS NETWORK

GOVERNMENT BY AND FOR MILLENNIAL AMERICA

A Blueprint for
21st Century Government

Presented by
the Roosevelt Institute
Campus Network

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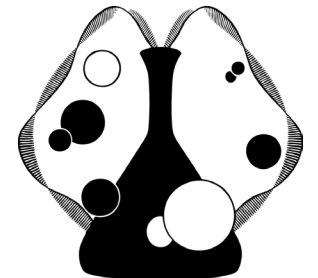
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INTRODUCTION

In 2008, Millennials crashed onto the political scene, proving to be a decisive influence on the election. Anomaly, the pundits claimed. Driven by a cult of personality, the commentators predicted¹.

IDEAL (ADJ):

One regarded as exemplifying an ideal and often taken as a model for imitation

DEMOCRACY (N):

Government by the people

In 2012, we proved them wrong. This generation's investment in progress wasn't an anomaly; it was a bellwether². It's a

commitment to civic participation that goes beyond the voting booth – Millennials volunteer in record numbers, use powerful new tools in the pursuit of social justice, and innovate across sectors to find new ways to advance social good.

As the largest student policy organization in the country, the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network captured the defining civic values of our generation – **a deeply held concern for equity, a respect for the individual and society, and a belief in community empowerment and self determination** – through the *Blueprint for the Millennial America*, a 2010 document that united thousands of young people behind a vision for the future we wanted to inherit in the year 2040. It embraced a remarkable boldness amid a period of economic uncertainty and political stagnation.

However, there was a growing recognition and frustration that our institutions were ill prepared to tackle the complex challenges ahead of us, from climate change to rising inequality. Campus Network members, who work on the ground to design and implement ideas for change, experience first-hand the gap between our ambitions for progress and the shortcomings of our current system. While Millennials strongly believe in an activist government, fewer than 30 percent believe their voice is currently represented in the democratic process³.



Yet true to this generation's unique ethos and commitment to pragmatic problem solving, Millennials across the country rejected the idea that the system was too broken, too stagnant, and too outdated. Instead, in an election year marked in two competing visions of the role of government in tackling our most pressing social and economic challenges, we at the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network recognized an opportunity to articulate a Millennial vision for government: a sketch of an ideal democracy grounded in our values and reflective of our unique era.

As a result, *Government By and For Millennial America* was born. The third part of the Campus Network's blueprint series, *Government By and For* tackles some of the most fundamental, divisive, and difficult questions about the purpose of government in furthering our country's progress. It focuses on the nuts and bolts of the process of change: How can we hear from more voices? How can we be more transparent? How can government be more egalitarian? How can we further collective solutions to our collective challenges? These questions are central to our democracy.

Most importantly, *Government By and For Millennial America* is grounded in a fundamental idea that defines America's distinctive pursuit of self-governance. In the words of our namesake:

Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.

- President Franklin D. Roosevelt

We set out to craft a blueprint and discovered, in conversations with over a thousand young people across the country, that the **Millennial generation is not yet ready to give up on the America's ever evolving experiment in a government by and for the people.**



METHODOLOGY & FRAMEWORK

At the core of the Campus Network's model is a value that we describe as progressive in process as well as in outcome. In short, our membership believes solutions and ideas are strongest and have the greatest impact when the process is inclusive and driven by the communities most affected by the problem being tackled. As such, *Government By and For Millennial America* was constructed with the input of Millennial Americans from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, regions, and experiences. While we do not claim that this document represents all Millennials, we do believe it is reflective of the growing diversity of our country.

PROGRESSIVE (ADJ):

Favoring or advocating progress, change, improvement, or reform, as opposed to wishing to maintain things as they are

PROCESS (N):

A systemic series of actions directed to some end

Government by and for Millennial America was built in two parts:

1. **Deliberative in person and online conversations** on democracy and government held on campuses and in communities across the country, reaching over 1,000 Millennials over six months; and
2. **Working groups** composed of 40 young people who, based on the data and information collected in our cross-country conversations, carved out democratic discussion spaces to debate, research, and craft the ideas that are presented here.

It would be disingenuous to claim that we speak for a generation rich in and proud of its diversity in thought, opinions, and experiences. However, in our efforts to live the values of the democratic system we aimed to



envision, we found a collective voice and framework. In each discussion, participants created discussion spaces that fostered complex dialogues designed to gear them toward ambitious yet grounded outcomes and innovative but pragmatic ideas.

It was a difficult task: Not only were we collecting Millennial thoughts and opinions on government's purpose, we were committed to challenging them to re-imagine the status quo. It's a tall order for a two to three hour conversation.

The Conversations

Why hold conversations across the country? As we discovered with the Blueprint for the Millennial America, our generation is more honest, engaged, and critical when provided a platform to debate, critique, and explore viewpoints. What better way to envision an ideal democracy than to model the process?

What we witnessed was both inspiring and promising: these young people were debating the values that should underpin an ideal government,

creating caucuses to resolve disagreements, and begging for more time to grapple with particularly difficult questions. The ethos that emerged from these interactions – the enthusiasm for democracy in action, the frustration with current realities, and the resolve to strive for better – define the heart of this initiative.

After breaking into small groups (six to eight people), students were asked to imagine how an ideal democracy would function, identifying key values and responsibilities. The next step was the reintroduction of a handful of realities in the current system, such as problems with money in politics or equal protection under the law. Students examined issues through the lens of the values previously brainstormed, allowing them to reflect on the relevance of the different potential roles of government. Finally, once students discussed, ranked, and contributed to the list of problems facing our current system, each group unpacked a student-written case study. They were asked to drill down on how their values and their new conception of government affected what might be a familiar problem and to generate some unfamiliar solutions.

The Data

The data in *Government By and For Millennial America* was collected in two parts. The first set, collected from 200 participants, was used to develop a structure with which to envision the different ways we think about government: Government as Steward of the Common Good, Government as Lawmaker, Government as It Engages Citizens, and Government as Innovator. We believe these pillars are at the core of what a democratic government should aspire to be.

The second set of data expanded on the first, providing participants with the opportunity to rank what they believed was the main challenge to the government's ability to fulfill its responsibility as defined in the pillar. Additionally, participants ranked the roles of government, as defined in each pillar, by importance.

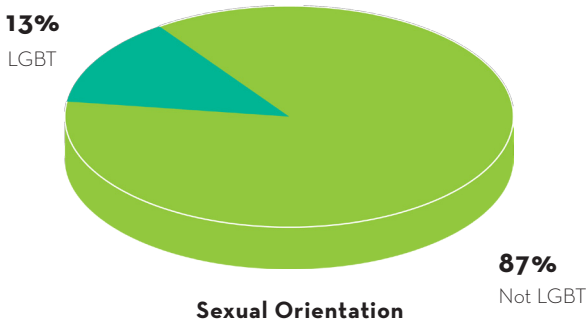
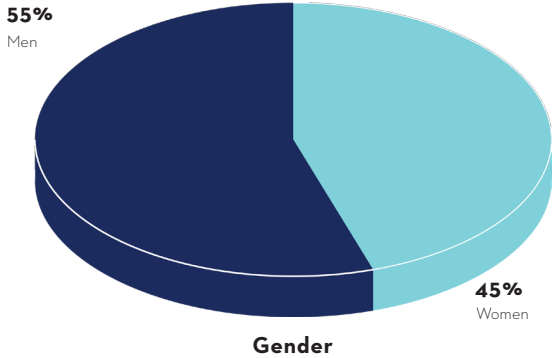
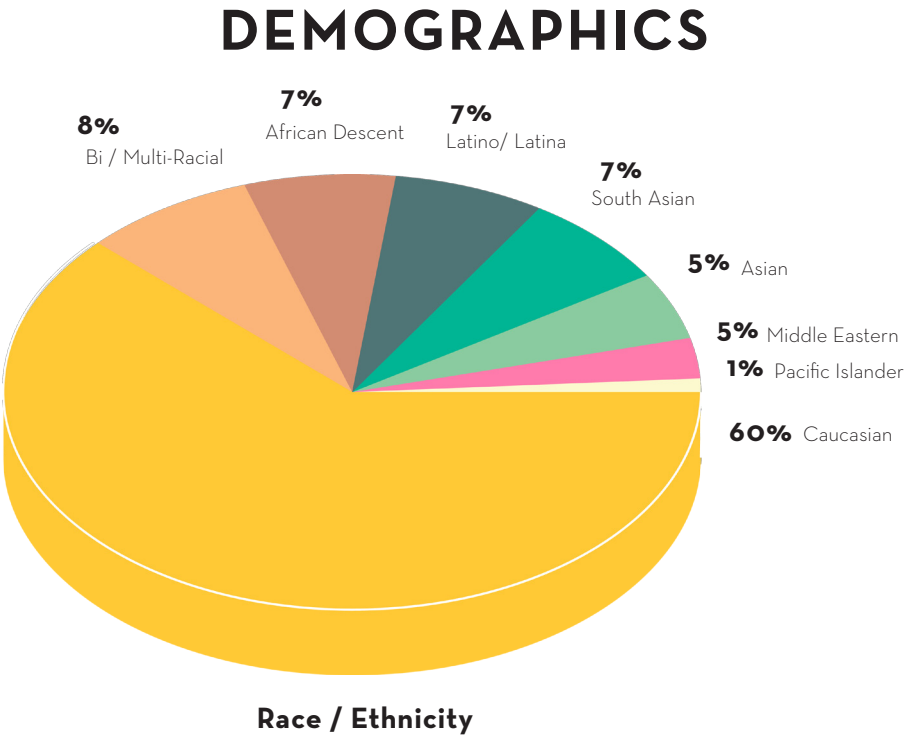
After data collection, working groups composed of 40 volunteers aggregated and processed the data and used it as a baseline to identify 1) the values a democratic system should embody, 2) government's

responsibilities to its citizens (which informed the ranking of the pillars), and 3) the most pressing challenges or barriers to government fulfilling those responsibilities. In short: we looked at what needs to change.

The Participants

Of the 1,000 young people who were involved, 600 directly participated in the conversations in person and 400 participated in shortened versions or online.

A note on process: The Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network engages young people on college campuses, including four-year institutions, nontraditional schools, HBCUs, and community colleges. We recognize that this means certain populations, including non-college going youth, are not represented here. While we regret this is the case, it is due to our limited resources.



THE FRAMEWORK: GOVERNMENT’S 4 PILLARS

There is a famous sound bite from 2008 of a gentleman standing up at a town hall meeting and telling his representative to “keep your government hands off my Medicare.” While it became a quip about the level of misinformation undergirding much of our political discourse today, it lends insight into how “government” is viewed in our time: a monolithic entity, detached from daily life, inaccessible, inefficient, and beyond saving.

It also hints at something more troubling: **the growing divide between the governed and government, lawmaker and voter, democracy and citizen, the haves and have-nots.** The divide shows up in the gap between our country's rapidly changing demographics and the faces that represent us on the national stage, the gap between the ambitions of a generation struggling to achieve the American dream and dwindling access to affordable, quality education, and the gap between income inequality and the (theoretical) political equality of all citizens.

Yet as a generation we believe this path is a chosen one, rather than an inevitable one. America's pursuit of a more perfect union continues to be a revolutionary idea, grounded in the ideals and values of justice, equality, and constant progress and in **the devout belief that we as citizens have equal say in the decisions affecting our lives.** We live in a unique time, facing challenges of unprecedented scale – and government, at the consent of the governed, is the only entity with the legitimacy and resources to lead us in collective action at a scale that can move us forward.

Therefore, this initiative aims to not only describe how government can be more effective, transparent, and equitable, but also to examine the purpose of our democracy in a period of constant and rapid change. It is only by doing so that we can articulate a vision for government that goes beyond big or small toward *better*.

What We Found: The Purpose of Government

What is the purpose of government? Our Constitution articulates its foundational duties: *to form a more perfect union, to establish justice, to provide for the common defense, to secure the blessings of liberty, to promote the general welfare, and to ensure domestic tranquility.* Defined positively, government is nothing less than the greatest tool at society's disposal to address the collective action problems of our day.

It is upon this foundation that government's roles and interpretations have evolved over time, adjusting to the unique circumstances of each generation, from President Roosevelt's New Deal to Wyoming's prescient support for women's right to vote a half-century before the 19th amendment. In our conversations, Millennials identified their **core values** for the functionality and process of governance. We found that it is critical for government to be **transparent** with its citizens, **equal** in its interactions across socio-economic communities, and **fair** in its decision-making. Taken together with the data on government's responsibilities, these values **suggest that government must first and foremost serve as a protector and promoter of the equality of all its citizens** and create the guideposts by which our progress and processes should be measured.

As we face 21st century challenges, we must build a 21st century government

Throughout *Government By and For Millennial America*, we frequently refer to the rights and roles of **citizens**. Yet how is this term defined? Who is a part of the common good? Permanent residents, foreigners in America on visas, and undocumented immigrants together total 37.9 million people. Although undocumented immigrants account for one eighth of the U.S. population, pay some taxes, live under the country's laws, and do socially necessary work that contributes to society, **they are often outside the equal protection of the laws, which begs a closer look at how they interact with our democracy.** Further, with the rise of globalization, our common good is becoming ever more linked with those outside our borders. Although not fully addressed here, one of our greatest challenges moving forward as a country is how to adjust our policies and priorities to recognize the porous nature and growing interconnectedness of our communities in the United States.

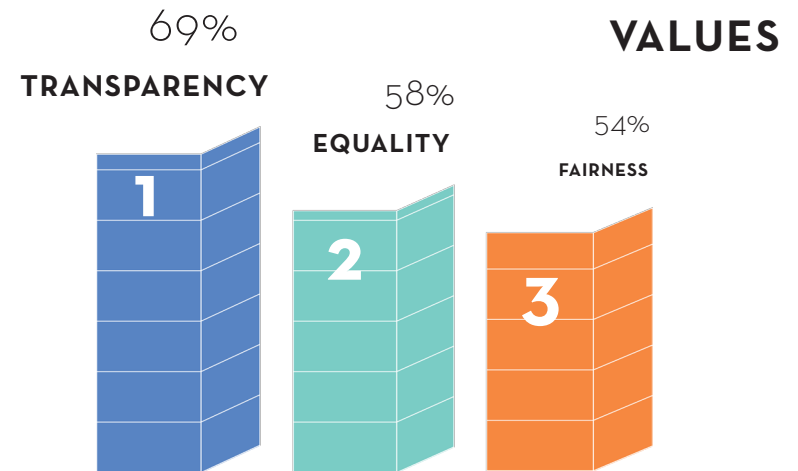
that views its primary purpose as tapping into the ingenuity, diversity, and dynamism of every citizen to work toward a better future. Never before has there been so much potential – or commitment – to leverage the unique contributions of **all of us** in the pursuit of the common good. To do so, government at all levels can and should take proactive steps to invest in the economic, social, and political freedoms of its citizens to ensure a thriving, healthy democracy and equal opportunity for every American.



THE PILLARS STRUCTURE

To both identify the big picture and the pragmatic solutions, each of the four pillars identifies:

- I. THE VISION: What gov't can aspire to be
- II. THE RESPONSIBILITIES: The core (if not exhaustive) responsibilities of that pillar
- III. THE CHALLENGES: What's not working and a sample of what we can do about it.



The Pillars of Government

To connect the purpose of a 21st century government to the realities we face, participants came together to identify the different roles of government and connect those to clear changes we can make to our system. This initiative does not tackle all the different ways that government can be more efficient, effective, and inclusive, nor can it fully examine the interactions with other systems whose health is critical to our nation's success. But by exploring how well government is achieving its core purpose and by examining the areas in which the Millennial generation sees common purpose instead of divided issues, we can identify some of the concrete changes we can make today to achieve a more perfect union tomorrow.

As outlined by the working groups, the four identified pillars are Government as Steward of the Common Good, Government as Lawmaker, Government as It Engages Citizens, and Government as Innovator. These pillars are grounded in the values and responsibilities articulated by participants. **By understanding the connection between these roles, we can understand how to fully realize a government that leads us to a more just, creative, and pragmatic future.**

3



IT ENGAGES CITIZENS

Government as Steward of the Common Good, identified by participants as government's most important role, envisions government not just as a service provider for a few but as an entity that creates and coordinates systems for the benefit of society at large. To do so, the pillar explores how government can **ensure a baseline for economic and social security, provide equal access to opportunity, and strengthen a values-driven economy.** This pillar has also become a guiding principle for the other three, as the conversations constantly came back to a central point: If laws, engagement, and innovation are not advancing the common good, then they risk detracting from our vision of government as a mutually beneficial community.

1



STEWARD OF THE COMMON GOOD

2

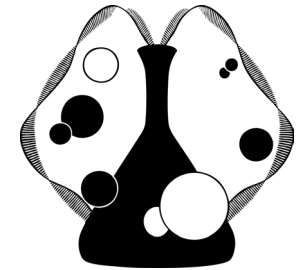


LAWMAKER

Government as Lawmaker,

identified by participants as government's second most important role, envisions how government can be more inclusive and reflective of our values through a legal framework. To do so, the pillar explores how government can **facilitate a deliberative process that supports the debate of ideas, modernizes the means by which citizens connect to and elect their lawmakers, and establishes a lawmaking framework that is forward thinking and responsive.** Writing about the process of government has made it clear: we have goals for government that simply cannot be accomplished without a system that operates more effectively and brings more voices into the process.

4



INNOVATOR

Government as It Engages Citizens,

identified by participants as government's third most important role, envisions how governmental institutions can be more proactive and inclusive in their engagement with citizens and make discussion spaces available to as many people as possible. To do so, the pillar explores how government can **provide access to civic and political education, encourage productive and informed political participation, and expand access to democratic spaces.**

Government as Innovator,

identified by participants as government's fourth most important role, envisions how government can drive innovation as well as how we can create a new ethos for how government functions, one dedicated to inclusive collaboration, metrics-driven efficiency, and innovative approaches. To do so, the pillar explores how government can **innovate how it works, incubate creative ideas that drive America's competitiveness, and chart the course for inclusion, equity, and civil rights.** Our generation faces unprecedented challenges but can access new ideas, technologies, and solutions with unprecedented speed. We need a government that can do more than keep up with the private sector – we need a government that leads.

Overall, these pillars are mutually reinforcing. By addressing civics education, we can tackle inequality; by examining how social programs work through metrics-driven analysis, we can create effective preventative programs that improve upon regressive criminal justice policies. Most importantly, we can ensure that every citizen can actively participate in a government by and for all people.

The issue of money in politics perhaps best highlights the connections between our Pillars. On the one hand, access to money clearly can limit who represents us, holds elected office, and makes laws governing our society. On the other, money is at the root of the question of how an individual shows up in a democracy and how one person should represent one vote.

This situates the question of money in politics squarely between Government as **Lawmaker** and Government as It **Engages Citizens**, so we place in its own section with roots in both pillars.



HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document is unique. It is not only student-generated, but it's also student-written with ideas expressed in their own words with a variety of voices.

What made it into the document? Out of the hundreds of proposals submitted, students deliberated, analyzed, and negotiated in pursuit of a final document that identified and advocated for a combination of the most actionable policies, the most promising concepts, and the unanswered questions for our generation. This document does not – and could not – fully capture the range of needed reforms and possible solutions. It does, however, provide a snapshot of our collective thinking and a starting point for further conversation and debate about our values, priorities, and the future of government.

How is this structured? In each of the four pillars – Government as Steward of the Common Good, Government as Lawmaker, Government as It Engages Citizens, and Government as Innovator – you will first find a description of students' aspirations for how the government fulfills that role. You'll then see the top three responsibilities (as determined by the data and conversations) students identified within that pillar. Finally, the document details sample challenges and solutions that provide insight into the scope of possibilities for working toward a better government. The ideas include a selection of:

The Concrete: What can be acted on today?

The Visionary: What can we work toward for the future?

The Structural: What challenges require a deeper look at how our systems reflect our values before we identify solutions?

In short, we believe that truly systemic, sustainable change can only occur if we tackle incremental changes while pursuing the transformational.

STEWARD (N):

defender; guardian, stabilizer, enabler

COMMON GOOD (N):

the good of a community



GOVERNMENT AS STEWARD OF THE COMMON GOOD

VISION

We believe that a core role for government is to act as a steward of the common good and a guarantor of the fundamental equality required for any democracy. This means viewing government not merely as a service provider for the poor, but as an entity that addresses collective action problems in order to promote opportunity and prosperity for all. It means empowering government to be the defender of every individual's access to the basic essentials – such as education, shelter, healthcare, and a livable minimum wage – that make it possible to fully participate in civic life. By ensuring a universal baseline, we do away with the artificial distinctions of makers and takers and instead bind ourselves in a community of mutual responsibility and success.

In a time of ever-rising inequality and economic uncertainty, our generation recognizes the importance of a government that embraces the values of fairness and equality. Because inequality compromises the promise of equal opportunity, it is imperative that government stands by the ethos “we’re all in this together” in overcoming the challenges of our age. This means we must not only focus on maximizing raw economic output, but on promoting balanced, sustainable, and broad-based prosperity for all. By reimagining the American dream for our generation, we believe government can best serve as steward of the common good by:

- 1) Ensuring a baseline for economic and social security,
- 2) Providing equal access to opportunity, and
- 3) Strengthening a values-driven economy

ENSURE A BASELINE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The social safety net in the United States has long been one of the strongest bonds of our social contract, lifting millions out of poverty

and supporting families in times of need. In combination with a robust education system, a living wage, and a fair economy, social programs have provided a pathway to economic opportunity for multiple generations. However, with increasing pressure on local and state budgets, critical programs that serve communities in need are facing choices that arbitrarily leave some behind. By ensuring a baseline for economic and social security, government invests in the potential of all of its citizens.

SHOULD A ROOF OVER YOUR HEAD BE LEFT TO CHANCE?

THE CHALLENGE: THE LOTTERY SYSTEM FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Access to affordable housing for every family is vital to ensuring democratic equality and economic security, but housing in America is increasingly unaffordable for residents at the low end of the market.

/41 PERCENT
OF THE
HOMELESS ARE
FAMILIES WITH
CHILDREN /⁵

Although federal and local governments provide either physical housing or subsidies for private housing, demand for affordable housing far exceeds the supply of both units and funding.⁶ While the current solution is to provide both through a lottery system, it often

leads to interminable waiting lists and a stark disparity in treatment between two equally poor people. If we believe that safe, stable, and affordable housing is a right, then we must move away from the current lottery-based arrangement, which prevents government from assuring that all who need affordable housing are guaranteed assistance.

While current economic and political situations might make expanding the social safety net difficult, we can improve existing models to ensure that a higher percentage of low-income individuals have access to affordable housing. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is currently the best program for increasing the very small supply of housing for the poor: as the biggest housing assistance program in the United States, it generated \$5.7 billion in credits to promote the construction of low-income housing in 2009.⁷ Under the program, a developer receives ten years of tax credits from the federal government in exchange for guaranteeing that a certain percentage of the units rented go to individuals that make below an income threshold. The housing market



is generally one that disfavors the low income either because of the prevalence of high rents often caused by restrictive zoning or because of slumlords' mistreatment of low-income tenants. This program shifts the market to increase supply for low-income housing and is a key example of how government can serve as a steward of the common good by redesigning the market to suit a broader swath of society's needs.⁸

With additional political muscle, the LIHTC could be changed in key ways that would make it more effective in achieving its mission of increasing housing supply to help the 7.7 million extremely low-income (ELI) renters.⁹ The tax credit largely fails to place stipulations on the size of affordable units, their location, or their level of quality. Drawing on the work of David P. Cohen, the law should be amended to address these gaps to ensure that the low-income units that we subsidize actually meet the needs of low-income families.¹⁰ Additionally, the LIHTC could be amended to improve access. The credit allows for landlords to rent 20 percent of units to families with incomes at 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) or to rent 40 percent of units to families at 60 percent of AMI. Because of the increased returns from higher income families, the vast majority of developments follow the 60 percent rule. The LIHTC should thus be amended so that more financial assistance is extended to developers in exchange for accepting tenants that fall well below the 60 percent level. The proposed increase in the credit could be

Interested in how the budget math works? Check out our Budget for Millennial America, the second installment in our Blueprint Series, which outlines how we can make fiscally responsible investments today in the pursuit of better policies and better government tomorrow.

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on a sliding scale to both give greater incentive to house the very poor and to make up for the lost income from housing these tenants.

PROVIDE EQUAL ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

By identifying how our choices impact different populations, we can improve the rules of the game to guarantee that everyone has the same stability, protection, and opportunity to succeed. **A person's background or socioeconomic status should not be what determines his living conditions, his quality of education, or his access to democratic spaces.** From evaluating how the benefits and costs of economic growth are distributed across communities to thinking about how government can promote a framework of rights that enables workers to organize, government can foster a 21st century economy and social institutions that provide everyone the opportunity to prosper.

DOES CITIZENSHIP STOP AT THE OFFICE DOOR? THE CHALLENGE: RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE

During the Progressive Era, labor occupied a central place in American social and political discourse. Because organizing and collective bargaining were inextricably connected to the broader struggles for social and political justice, building a strong labor movement was viewed as essential for a healthy democracy. Today, however, the labor movement has been weakened, mostly disconnected from the discussion of democracy and reduced to a question of whether unions are good or bad. The core issue at stake here is not whether we should have unions, but how we are protecting and promoting the rights and interests of workers in a 21st century economy.

With pro-business labor law and numerous attempts to roll back or eliminate collective bargaining rights at the state level, the task of building worker voice, autonomy, and organization in the workplace has grown extremely difficult. As a result, the vast majority of employees have little or no voice in shaping management or determining the terms of their own employment. The inability to exercise power and bear responsibility in shaping one's life

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at work starkly contrasts with a citizen's ability to self-govern in the political sphere. This contradictory existence undermines the fundamental equality of citizenship.

There are two possible steps we can take immediately to improve the right of workers to collectively bargain and organize: 1) repeal the Mackay doctrine and 2) streamline the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election process. The Mackay doctrine was established in a 1938 Supreme Court case and asserts the right of employers to fill positions left vacant by workers on strike. When the strike ends, employers are not legally bound to discharge those hired to replace the strikers.

The Mackay doctrine – always designed to weaken the act of striking – has grown increasingly pernicious in the past few decades as the labor force modernized. With greater mobility, jobs moving overseas, and the country's transformation to a service economy, labor's traditional levers of power have weakened significantly. By prohibiting employers from permanently replacing workers during a strike, we can significantly improve the effectiveness of the act of striking and of collective bargaining in general, not just for workers in traditional industries but for all who are part of the labor force.

We can also shorten the time it takes to schedule union elections. At the moment, the gap between petitioning the NLRB for an election and that election being scheduled is too long.¹² Part of this long wait time is due to the clunky nature of the NLRB election process and part of

it is due to employer interference. For example, employers can file a claim with the NLRB accusing the union of unfair practices just before an election.¹³ The NLRB must then investigate, which further delays the election. Employers often take advantage of this time by running anti-union campaigns and utilizing legal and illegal tactics to intimidate workers. Such tactics include firing workers who are seen as union leaders or influencers, intimidating workers, and threatening to close or dramatically restructure the workplace. Tactics of this sort can crush a movement before it even gets off the ground and leave workers voiceless and powerless, especially in industries that have not traditionally been unionized.¹⁴

Two possible NLRB election reforms include decreasing the number of days between when workers file a petition and when an election is scheduled and ending election postponements due to mandated NLRB investigations. Investigations should still be conducted if a claim is made, but they should be conducted after the election in order to prevent further (often unnecessary and tactical) delays.

WHO BENEFITS FROM ECONOMIC GROWTH?

THE CHALLENGE: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES



In order to live meaningful, productive lives and truly participate in democracy, people must have their basic needs met, including the guarantee of a safe and healthy living environment. However, the current framework of our economic infrastructure endangers this ideal. Key components of economic infrastructure and growth, such as industrial facilities, hazardous waste sites, oil refineries, and freight infrastructure are often built closest to low-income minority communities. While this can help boost economic growth in low-income areas, it also leaves these communities to bear the brunt of growth's negative

externalities – such as pollution, hazardous waste, and the weakening of community health and wellbeing – almost exclusively by themselves. We commit a grave injustice when the environmental implications of growth

WHO CAN ACCESS HIGHER EDUCATION? THE CHALLENGE: THE DWINDLING SUPPORT FOR THE TRULY PUBLIC UNIVERSITY



The privatization of public universities is a trend that severely jeopardizes a crucial component of the common good – namely, the ability of all citizens to access quality higher education. As state governments withdraw their commitment to fully fund public universities and keep up with growing student demand, the number of government grants, subsidized loans, and tax breaks given to private sector education companies have grown considerably. According to advocates of privatization, farming out government functions in this way will inject our education system with greater choice, quantity, and quality.

Undermining this logic is the assumption that the supply of high-quality private universities meets the total demand of students. Yet traditional private universities are holding steady at about 20 percent of higher education enrollment while for-profits companies continue to fail to measure up to traditional public higher education.¹⁵ More interested in increasing profit margins than the quality of education, for-profits churn out graduates with worse employment prospects than those at community colleges.¹⁶ When the supply of a good is capped, as is happening in this sector, the result is skyrocketing price increases, rationing, and “fake supply.” In other words, students are now facing fewer viable choices and diminishing public support to fall back on. Because the private sector cannot be relied on to provide justly and effectively for all, government must renew its commitment to truly *public* higher education.

are not taken seriously and when certain groups are forced to pay the full costs of growth while receiving little of its benefits.

The majority low-income, minority population of the city of Richmond in Northern California is a perfect example of a group living with these costs but not gaining the benefits. Close proximity to five oil refineries, eight Superfund sites, many rail yards and ports where tankers dock, and a large number of toxic waste sites have left the community with higher rates of asthma and respiratory problems, cancer, lung disease, and even school absences. Despite its many challenges, however, Richmond has been a model for the environmental justice movement.¹⁷

To address the larger structural issue, solutions to this problem must entail improving current policies and regulations for industrial economic growth (most notably, zoning and land use considerations) so as to take the environmental implications of growth seriously. Improvement

on this front demands that we resist vested oil and energy interests that have a strong influence over which policies are implemented, introduce a cost mechanism that holds industries accountable for their different pollutants, and set up democratic and participatory spaces for communities to meaningfully regain oversight and control of their own health, economy, and environment.

We can and must do more to protect the living environment of every community so that everyone has an equal opportunity to be educated, find employment, engage in democracy, and live healthy, productive lives.

STRENGTHENING A VALUES-DRIVEN ECONOMY

In what ways can government facilitate and support a just and fair economy? A vibrant and sustainable economy, supported by a healthy



Student Highlight: James Underberg
and the Cornell Chapter Environmental Initiative

To help create impactful change around environmental policy, James Underberg, a Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network member and senior at Cornell University, and the rest of the RICN Cornell chapter have joined forces with their school community's local government. In November 2012, student activists from the Cornell chapter that had been working on solving environmental issues attended a meeting of the Ithaca Common Council and proposed a resolution urging the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce greenhouse gas emission by embracing the Clean Air Act. With a unanimous vote, the Ithaca Common Council adopted the Cornell chapter's resolution.

private sector, serves as the main engine of our country's strength. While it is certainly true that the private sector is the main engine of our economic growth, it is less clear that it can guarantee everything that our generation values. For Millennials, a values-driven economy is one that promotes economic stability and fair treatment in our economic system guided by the ethos "we're all in this together." By thinking through the purposes of systems such as our tax code and subsidies, we can structure our economy to reflect our values, achieve our priorities, and guarantee economic stability.

*IN A TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED WORLD,
IS ACCESS TO INFORMATION A RIGHT?
THE CHALLENGE: DEVELOPING A 21ST CENTURY
FIBER OPTIC BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE*



The Internet has become an integral part of our daily lives. It connects us to each other and to the rest of the world. It fosters economic growth and drives innovation through precise and constant data exchange and crowd-sourced fundraising projects. However, our current Internet infrastructure fails to provide equal access across poverty lines and geographic barriers, a reality that exacerbates our socioeconomic divide as more and more of our society's functions move online.

While America currently ranks among the top nations in the globe in terms of web access and Internet infrastructure, we are falling further behind the international community each year in the deployment of broadband access. Currently, one out of five (18 percent) Americans still do not have Internet access. Of those that do, one-third do not have broadband.¹⁸ This lack of access often falls on already marginalized communities: people making under \$30,000 per year, predominantly black and Hispanic communities, and people without high school diplomas. To address the issue of equal access, we must provide more than availability; we must also address the issues of cost and quality. In many ways, broadband access underpins much of the rest of this document: from access to lawmakers, to fostering educated and engaged citizens, to opening up opportunities for innovation and collaboration,

this generation sees high-speed and reliable Internet as tantamount to the importance of electricity in 1933.

By creating a national fiber optic broadband infrastructure, we can not only remedy the problems related to the Internet, but also improve television and phone line service. Fiber optic wiring, which uses a glass-based wire to direct signals with much less signal loss than conventional cable wiring, can travel farther without signal boosting. Currently, there is no commercially viable alternative that is close to the performance of fiber optics cables.

*DO SUBSIDIES PROMOTE FAIR GROWTH OR SPECIAL INTERESTS?
THE CHALLENGE: SUSTAINABLE FARM SUBSIDIES*

When we choose how we subsidize, we make a clear values-based choice about what we believe to be important. In their original incarnation, subsidies were meant to buffer all farmers against the risk of disasters and keep them producing on their land.¹⁹ However, today the approximately \$17.5 billion spent per year on agricultural subsidies favor only 10 percent of farmers—specifically, the largest 10 percent.²⁰



Our subsidy programs benefit the country's mega farms disproportionately at the expense of much more vulnerable, smaller independent farmers.

While the present state of American agricultural subsidization is outdated and favors quantity over quality, we must not demonize the idea of a farmer safety net altogether. Rather, subsidies can be returned to their originally intended purpose of ensuring a livelihood for all American farmers while protecting a healthy food supply by creating a crop insurance model that ensures farmers an annual living wage in the event of disaster.

To do so, legislation should be enacted that reduces the subsidy payments cap to a living wage (determined according to state-by-state cost of living estimates), changes the subsidy structure to one of actual crop disaster insurance, and does not limit payment eligibility to commodity growers alone. These changes would reduce the overall cost of the crop insurance system and free up funding for investment in sustainable agriculture training.

Instead of spending on excessive subsidy payments, the surplus funds could be invested in sustainable agriculture training to help farmers increase their income and self-sustainability. There are many benefits of such an investment. First, by training farmers in polycultural growing practices, we can reduce the risk of widespread crop loss. For example, when more than one crop is grown on a given farm, a single pest is unlikely to wipe out a farmer's entire income. Second, growing a variety of foods regionally strengthens local economies and protects the food supply by allowing a region to feed itself sustainably in the absence of mass corporate transportation, mass processing, and so on. Lastly, there will be decreased incentives for large-scale monocultures to proliferate when crop insurance only guarantees a large-tract farmer the same amount of income as the small farmer next door. Subsidies that are better aligned with the values of the government and its people must grant each and every farmer the same chance to provide good and

The Big Idea: Investing in Private-Public Partnership



Google Fiber, a pilot program that uses the FTX or “fiber to the x” model, enables any business, home, and/or apartment complex viable for a fiber optic uplink to be fitted. The pilot project addresses an area of the nation that has poor high-speed broadband support and is showcasing the potential for fiber to become a viable and affordable national infrastructure.²¹

By investing funds already allocated for the purpose of expanding our broadband infrastructure into companies like Google Fiber, we can build a national infrastructure of fiber optic wiring. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 allocated \$7.9 billion to the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to expand our nation's broadband infrastructure. We suggest that money be used for long-term federal loans, which could guarantee support for the financing of local build out. This public-private collaboration would be able to address problems of quality, cost, and accessibility simultaneously.²²

WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN PROVIDING STABILITY? THE CHALLENGE: SHIELDING CITIZENS FROM WALL STREET INSTABILITY

One of the leading causes of the 2008 financial crisis was high-risk gambling on financial derivatives. Gambling – defined as trades that increase the aggregate risk exposure of all parties involved – should not be confused with insurance, which diversifies risk and thus results in a positive net outcome for all parties. We must determine how to regulate the market to simultaneously promote social gains from insurance

transactions while limiting the negative effects of gambling. Though the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act calls for the creation of new federal regulatory agencies that will reduce incentives for gambling and grant existing agencies a broader reach in monitoring financial transactions, its proposed methods are vague and untested. More specific regulation of derivatives is necessary in order to decrease systemic risk and increase economic stability.

An FDA-style regulation would mitigate risk stemming from financial derivatives.²³ The FDA utilizes a system that weighs the risks against the benefits of a certain product. If the risk is minimal compared to the intended gains, certification is granted. Although this generalized model is widely accepted in the market for high-risk goods, it has not been effectively implemented for high-risk derivatives. The risk here is that stronger regulation could stifle innovation. While the link between regulation and innovation is not clear, it is clear that the explosion in derivatives trading in the early 2000s as a result of deregulation led to higher aggregate risk and thus a highly unstable economic environment. FDA-style regulation of the financial market would limit the chance of another financial collapse, which would mean limiting the chance of greater unemployment and economic suffering.

FDA-style regulation and certification would mean assessing risk using the accepted Value at Risk measurement system.²⁴ Financial derivatives trading would be allowed within a range of VaRs. A product deemed too risky is characterized by a failed pay out that would result in a loss of investment and preexisting wealth for a large number of people, whereas a safer product allows for a widespread diversification of risk and thus insures a larger number of people against sudden financial loss.

There are many examples that illustrate how high-risk derivatives gambling can affect third parties and also contribute to significant financial loss outside of investment markets. An implied government bailout when high-risk bets flop incentivizes financial institutions to gamble, since they know the government will share the associated risks. By certifying which financial products are available for trade, rather than cleaning up after the fact, the federal government can significantly reduce large risk accumulation and protect third parties from economic devastation.



LAW (N):

the principles and regulations established in community by some authority and applicable to its people

Maker (N):

a person or thing that produces something



GOVERNMENT AS LAWMAKER

VISION

In the narrowest of terms, government as lawmaker describes government's responsibility to provide the legal framework in which we operate. Unfortunately, due to the growing complexity of our system, lawmakers and the laws that govern our lives have become deeply disconnected from the people that live under them. If government is of, by, and for the people, then genuine representation and inclusion in lawmaking is essential to the manifestation of societal values and priorities in both policy and procedure. A government that is transparent in its processes, accountable in its results, and accessible to the people is fundamental to democracy and good governance. In short, the government's role as lawmaker is not simply about how we make laws, but about how we can improve the debate, process, and execution of the rules governing our democracy. By creating a flexible and representative framework, we believe government can serve in its capacity as lawmaker by:

- 1) Facilitating a deliberative process that supports a debate of ideas,
- 2) Modernizing the means by which citizens elect their lawmakers, and
- 3) Establishing a lawmaking framework that is forward thinking and responsive to constituents.

FACILITATE A DELIBERATIVE PROCESS THAT SUPPORTS A DEBATE OF IDEAS

It's at the core of any strong democracy: the debate of ideas in pursuit of the best way forward. Every few years, Americans vote for representatives who go to school board meetings, state capitols, and the halls of Congress to engage with experts, confer on principles, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of policies and proposals. However, the process is currently stymied by outdated rules and bogged

down in the pursuit of political points over reflective problem solving. Even worse, governing bodies do not fully capitalize on the diversity of the United States. **To restore our government's ability to be a force for progress, it must first return to a deep respect for ideas, debate, and compromise built around a space for open discussion and productive argument.**

HOW DO WE BUILD A SYSTEM ORIENTED TOWARDS SOLVING CHALLENGES?

THE CHALLENGE: THE FILIBUSTER AS A TOOL FOR EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

Congress has become host to uncompromising partisan politics, obstructionism, and political games that have resulted in complete congressional gridlock and the least productive year in modern history. As a result, few meaningful policy measures are coming from Congress and the federal government has all but ground to a halt. The filibuster, once used as a tool to foster a free market of ideas, is a prime example of a rule that has become an obstructionist's greatest weapon, utilized to gain an unearned strength of voice.

On the first day of the 112th Congress, Senator Mark Udall proposed a series of changes in the Senate's rules in order for it to do its job more efficiently.²⁵ While it appears that the 113th congress will, once again, choose to forgo sweeping filibuster reform, his proposal still serves as a model for how we believe reform should move forward.

Firstly, the playing field must be leveled between majority and minority groups on cloture votes. Currently, a majority needs 60 votes to invoke cloture, which is three-fifths of the members sworn into office. If we instead maintain the three-fifths requirement among members present and voting, Senators cannot use the filibuster without being a part of the debate. In addition, we suggest implementing a phase out filibuster that would encourage increased debate. Currently, a majority must find 60 votes to invoke cloture in order to end a filibuster. Yet as time passes and debate continues, this requirement should decay until only a simple majority is needed. The Senate should decide upon the amount of time

between each new requirement and the number of votes by which each requirement is lowered.

Secondly, we should eliminate filibusters on the motion to proceed, post-substitute passage, and on votes moving to conference. This would prevent a single senator or a small minority group from obstructing debate before a final vote but would not keep minority parties from being able to block a bill, thus preserving the core goal of the tool. Eliminating the filibuster on the motion to proceed would make it easier for the majority to set the legislative agenda and bring bills to the floor for debate.²⁶

Thirdly, In order to allow the minority to offer amendments, the majority leader should no longer completely block all amendments. A 50-vote motion to call up amendments with a limit of five per day enables the minority to have amendments heard and would help reestablish the Senate as a free market of ideas.

Finally, the filibuster is often abused to halt judicial nominations.²⁷ In order to eliminate these delays, a final confirmation vote should immediately follow a cloture vote, rather than a 30-hour period of post-cloture debate. In addition, a Senate rule should be passed that all judicial and public service nominations receive a simple up or down vote within 90



days to ensure that the Senate may return ineffective nominations back to the president in a timely manner and confirm nominations faster so that affected institutions may run at full capacity.

HOW DO MAKE OUR REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT... REPRESENTATIVE?



THE CHALLENGE: FIXING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Representation matters. Ensuring that each person's vote counts equally is vital for the health of our democracy, but our current electoral college system favors residents of some states over others. Because of their political balance, certain states swing elections every four years. Because of the Electoral College system, some voters are worth more than their fellow citizens.

Beyond the option of shifting to a National Popular Vote, one solution is a proportional electoral college, whereby each state's electors pledge their votes according to their state's popular vote outcome. Voters in decisively blue and red states would be incentivized to vote by the prospect of affecting the margin of their states' decisions, while voters in less populous states would maintain the increased per capita voting power they enjoy under the current electoral system. Furthermore, since every electoral vote would be up for grabs, candidates couldn't devote campaign resources to favor one faction or geographical area. The implementation of this system would require strict rules on how exactly to deal with fractional electoral votes, a situation that becomes tricky if we introduce the possibility of a third party candidate. Gathering enough popular support to carry electoral votes would mean going beyond simply rounding up or down, which could result in too many or too few total electoral votes.

Another potential solution, one that would deal with the question of partial Electoral College votes, would be an

instant runoff election, where voters numerically rank their choices for president. If any single candidate does not achieve a majority on the

The Big Idea: Automatic Voter Registration



The Selective Service Administration, which tracks and contacts men to register for the draft and has a 91 percent contact and compliance rate while spending only \$22 million a year, has advanced a working model off of which a new initiative for comprehensive voter registration can be based.²⁸ This model demonstrates that government agencies can collaborate to track and contact citizens in a cost-effective manner while maintaining database security, preventing fraud, and preserving privacy.

The Election Assistance Commission should be empowered to build a federal list of eligible voters. Upon relocation or turning 18, the EAC should contact registrants by mail or through the Internet with a voter registration card. Cards would be returned, processed, and tracked to ensure accuracy in a similar manner used by the SSA.²⁹ This system takes the onus off new registrants and expands the franchise. A federal list can track and contact people even if they've crossed state lines, an issue current state-run Help America Vote Act lists can't manage. Though initial implementation would require substantial investment, the SSA has shown it is possible to contain costs through technological advances and governmental collaboration. And just as the SSA has very low rates of inaccuracies or fraud, a similar system would help curb illegal voting.

first vote, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated and his or her votes go to the candidate listed second on their ballots. This continues until a majority of votes has been counted for a single candidate.³⁰

Instant runoff elections are held in the United States in various states and cities, but introducing this process on the federal level would require a constitutional amendment. While this would obviously take a massive mobilization effort, such a thing is not impossible.³¹ Once passed, the introduction of electronic voting machines in states where they are currently not being used would be vital. They would make the counting of votes easier and would greatly decrease the likelihood of miscounts.

Not only would this system free people to vote for a third-party candidate without essentially voting for their least favorite, it would also facilitate more rational debate: candidates would have to campaign

to win over a majority of the population. Combining this idea with the proportional Electoral College measure would ensure that residents in every state would have an equal voice in the election. Conservative voters in California and liberals in Texas would no longer feel as though their votes were worthless, and voter turnout would potentially increase.

MODERNIZE THE MEANS BY WHICH CITIZENS ELECT THEIR LAWMAKERS

In the conversations, participants identified the act of voting as the baseline privilege in a democracy – a starting point for citizenship. Yet young people increasingly feel that their vote doesn't matter in a process

that systemically discriminates against certain groups and populations. As a result of ongoing abuses of the democratic process, from gerrymandering to disenfranchisement, Millennials increasingly see the results of a broken system in elected bodies that do not reflect the populations they serve.

/WHILE THEY ARE OVER 50 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION AND COLLEGE GRADUATES, WOMEN ONLY COMPOSE 20 PERCENT OF THE SENATE, 18 PERCENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND 14 PERCENT OF GOVERNORSHIPS/

The Big Idea: Online Voting



A high level of familiarity with using the Internet today, paired with the development of a national fiber optic infrastructure as discussed in *Steward of the Common Good*, and developments in Internet security make online voting within reach. Online voting would increase youth voter turnout and remove barriers for working, traveling, and generally busy adults. Lines at polling places would not be as long, election day costs and government processing fees would be cheaper, and states could count votes with the electronic software faster than any human ever could. Election officials may still be available at home and in polling places if individuals have questions, thus allowing anyone, regardless of their level of technological knowhow, to participate fully.

*SHOULD VOTING BE HARD?
THE CHALLENGE: AN OUTDATED
VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEM*



Currently, citizens in only 14 states may register to vote online.³² Paperless voting and registration is cost effective, saving states millions of dollars and resources.³³ Further, online registration requires less time to process applications and transfer information online and decreases opportunities for human error,

creating a more efficient and more accurate process than paper forms.³⁴ On average, implementing online voter registration takes only a year of development before launch and dramatically increases registration. Coordination also gets easier: as online voter registration programs emerge from state to state, streamlining the process so that election officials across states can share information if and when citizens move, the necessity and inaccuracy of voter roll purges will decrease.

**HOW CAN WE ENSURE THAT REGISTERED,
ELIGIBLE VOTERS WHO WANT TO VOTE CAN?**
THE CHALLENGE: ELECTION DAY MAYHEM



Expand Early Voting: In 32 states and the District of Columbia, voters may cast their votes without an excuse somewhere between four and 50 days before Election Day.³⁵ This provides the time and opportunity necessary for more individuals to vote, decreasing long lines on Election Day and increasing turnout more broadly. Freedom from needing to provide an excuse to vote early recognizes the number of reasons that may lead to vote early and promotes the right to vote over the responsibility to change one's work or family obligations in order to do so. Studies also show that this can bring out some of the most disadvantaged groups.³⁶

Election Day as a Federal Holiday: Declaring Election Day a federal holiday not only recognizes the importance of democracy and civic responsibility, but also enables citizens with demanding schedules the time to vote if they choose to do so.



DO SOME VOTES COUNT LESS THAN OTHERS?
THE CHALLENGE: GERRYMANDERING



Redistricting, a process of drawing and redrawing electoral district boundaries in response to population and demographic changes found in the U.S. Census every ten years, is meant to ensure that as populations change, each citizen is provided fair representation in Congress. At the conceptual core of redistricting are ideas about community and identity. The way lines are drawn can keep communities and voting blocs together or divide them.

Yet despite regulations, redistricting presents both process and outcome challenges. In most states, the creation of a redistricting plan falls in the hands of the state legislature, allowing incumbents to preserve their power by manipulating districts, “packing” and “cracking” communities in order to direct or diffuse voting power in their favor. Widespread gerrymandering can be in direct contradiction with the popular vote.³⁷

In 2008, an initiative passed in California that transferred redistricting powers over to a 14-member independent commission with a mandated mix of political representation. Once formed, the commission's redistricting process was led by a series of ranked criteria, beginning with legal adherence to population equality and the federal Voting Rights Act and extending to geographic contiguity, integrity, and compactness. The idea was and remains controversial, but research has shown that California holds some of the most competitive districts in the nation as a result of the commission's work in 2010.³⁸ While the program is too new to be regarded as a model for improving the current redistricting system, it has received bipartisan support within the state and illustrates the potential of allowing citizens to directly take charge on this issue.

Removing political self-interest from the redistricting process is a crucial step towards fairer and more equal representation and a better democracy. Yet a next step may not be to remove the politics from redistricting, but rather to limit the space available for politics to intervene. A creative proposal suggests creating model districting commissions. Established by state law and made up of citizens and

experts alike, each state's commission would operate alongside the state legislature, sketch out multiple redistricting plans, and hold competitions for citizens and stakeholders to propose their own plans.³⁹ Each commission could then present a plan to the legislature as an alternative to the state's plan. The commission should also have the power to strike legislature-proposed plans found, based on voting result estimates, to favor certain incumbents and candidates while also leaving some redistricting responsibilities with the legislators.⁴⁰

ESTABLISH A LAWMAKING FRAMEWORK THAT IS FORWARD- THINKING AND RESPONSIVE

Does our government execute and enforce the law in a way that stays true to its intent and core values? Most Americans feel that they do not have a say in what the government does.⁴¹ Government and lawmakers should be constantly self-reflecting in order to best reach and represent their citizenry as well as promote policy that stands past the next election. Without incentives to think about policy and democracy in different and important ways, government inertia fundamentally limits the execution of this duty.

*HOW DO WE CREATE LAWS THAT ADJUST FOR
THE LONG-TERM IMPACT ON FUTURE GENERATIONS?
THE CHALLENGE: SHORT-TERM INTERESTS OVER
LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS*

Another Idea? Term Extension:

By increasing House Representatives' terms to four years from two, lawmakers could spend more time creating meaningful legislation and less time campaigning.

While the Congressional Budget Office estimates long-term costs and economic ramifications of a bill as a core part of the debate around a bill's passage, Congress is not asked to reflect on the other far reaching effects that its legislation will have. The discussion of the effects of a given pieces of legislation is often narrow and sorely inadequate, resulting in innumerable unseen negative consequences as well as a reactive mindset.

While this is a concern that has dramatic consequences, there is a simple fix to make congressmen and women more forward thinking and more accountable: mandate the inclusion of a statement on every proposed bill, written by the congressperson's office, that shows how the legislation will impact future generations. This would initially be a simple exercise in forcing a few paragraphs of thoughtful reflection on the future. A more formal structure could include a Congressional Posterity Office or Office of Post-Script (OPS), which would serve in a similarly actuarial role to the CBO and judge PS statements on how they could play out over the medium and long term. A strict set of definitions for measuring "posterity" would need to be developed for a formal CBO-style structure to work.

The simple requirement of a Post Script would have multiple advantages for changing the nature of our debate. A PS would facilitate debate by giving citizens an easier way to see why a bill has been proposed. It would also act as a permanent record of intent, setting in stone exactly what the author of the bill claims that the bill is going to do. This would be valuable information for evaluating lawmakers' efficacy.

It would encourage people to think about the impact of their legislation on future generations, an exercise that falls by the wayside in many debates. While it would give each congressional office a chance for some grandstanding – making sweeping claims about a bill, for example, that could be hard to substantiate – it would provide a solid accountability mechanism.

*HOW CAN GOVERNMENT WORK TOWARDS A
MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DEMOCRACY?
THE CHALLENGE: LACK OF INCENTIVES
TO PROMOTE BETTER PRACTICES*

Our representatives need to be more directly accountable to their constituents in order to ensure that the work being done accurately reflects the needs of particular communities. Implementing a Democracy Index ranking system like that proposed by Heather K. Gerken and changing or extending term limits may create the opportunities for people to make more informed decisions about the people who represent them. While improved state-to-state and national standards should increase opportunities for democratic participation across the United States, it will be met differently in practice.

In order to incentivize elected officials to promote democracy and to give citizens tools and metrics to understand their own democratic institutions, states should be ranked using a “democracy index” to measure the efficiency and openness of how their elections are run.⁴² The index should be created by an independent commission of experts and not chaired by any elected officials who have a direct self-interest in the results. Metrics that could be used in calculating the democracy index include voter registration rates, turnout rates, amount of eligible voters turned away, polling hours available, and public opinion polls of how easy ballots and voter technology are to use.

While these metrics are easily available through a number of nonprofit and governmental sources, the process of sending officials their rankings will let lawmakers know where their states fit comparatively and how election administration can improve in order to increase their democracy score. By providing such rankings to the people, public pressure can be applied to elected officials, who will be incentivized to compete for and provide higher democracy ratings for their citizens.⁴³

MONEY IN POLITICS

*HOW CAN THE POLITICAL PLAYING FIELD
BE EQUALLY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL?*

CHALLENGE: THE CORROSIVE EFFECTS OF MONEY IN POLITICS

The First Amendment ensures the unfettered exchange of ideas in the pursuit of political and social change and secures the wide dissemination of information from a variety of sources. Clearly, the First Amendment is a critical component for a truly deliberative, accountable, and participatory democracy. However, the debate over Money in Politics has too often hinged on a false dichotomy: the right to free speech pitted against the crucial interests of democracy to equalize the political playing field and to keep elected officials accountable to the people. Because these two interests are such core components of the **Engages Citizens** and **Lawmaker** pillars, we have situated the issue of **Money in Politics** at the intersection between them.

While we must not forget that money in politics was a problem well before the Citizens United ruling, the past three years alone show how campaign contributions have granted the affluent a means to express their voices in a way that is not feasible for other citizens. Large contributions – including specific quid pro quo donations – have a corrupting effect on the system that seriously endangers our representative system of democracy. When elected officials are dependent on money to perform the public service entrusted to them, they become accountable to and representative of a small elite. For example, although 2012 election spending totaled \$6 billion, only 0.37 percent of Americans gave contributions of \$200 or more.⁴⁴

Unregulated money in politics does not mean the protection of individual liberty.

It means the distortion of political equality through economic inequality, a government that is less and less accountable to the people, and citizens who are increasingly pushed out of political decision-making.

To have a deliberative and participatory democracy, we must develop a norm of political equality and accountability such that the government is not solely responsive to the power of a wealthy few, but the power of deliberation and the consideration of ideas.

HOW CAN WE PUT ELECTED OFFICIALS BACK TO WORK? THE CHALLENGE: THE NEVER-ENDING ELECTION CYCLE

There should be a separate set of disclosure laws to combat a hidden campaign activity: time devoted to fundraising. Members of Congress spend anywhere from 30-70 percent of their time fundraising. This can result in devoting less time to constituents, as representatives are forced to focus only on the next election.⁴⁵

A law requiring members of Congress to report not only the sources of their funds but the amount of time they spend fundraising can tackle this problem. This law would encourage candidates to spend less time fundraising and more time serving their constituents, given the enhanced scrutiny. This would have the double effect of lessening the power of money in campaigns and increasing the extent to which elected officials are held accountable to their constituents.

/LESS THAN HALF
A PERCENT OF
THE POPULATION
FINANCED OVER
TWO-THIRDS OF
ALL POLITICAL
CAMPAIGN
SPENDING/

The Big Idea 1: Public Finance of Elections

The current Supreme Court has roundly rejected any system of public finance that dictates a limit on private spending in elections. Mandatory use of any public elections funds would therefore be impossible unless or until the make up of the court changes. Still, to be successful, campaign finance reform must level the playing field for candidates by providing legislators with alternative sources of funding.⁴⁵ “Clean election” campaign laws, such as those adopted by Maine, Connecticut, Arizona, and the city of New York, provide the option for a candidate to receive public funds if he or she agrees not to accept private contributions.⁴⁶ Such laws have withstood legal and political challenges over the years, and a majority of candidates of both parties participate in these systems, leading to big changes in who can run for office and who elected officials are dependent on.

The idea of clean elections raises two questions: where does this money come from, and who can use it? This sort of system could support the campaigns of federal candidates by giving funding entirely through a publicly financed “Patriot Fund.” The size of the Patriot Fund would depend on the amount that taxpayers chose to place in the fund in the preceding year. Currently, taxpayers have the option of channeling \$3 of their tax dollars to the Presidential Election Campaign Fund on the 1040 Federal Income Tax Return. To expand this pool, taxpayers should have the option of channeling \$5, \$10, or \$20 to finance the Patriot Fund, and offices beyond presidential candidates should have access. In this public financing option, candidates would have to not only forgo private money, but would also have to garner a certain number of signatures (depending on their desired office) to have access to the funds. While public financing is good, an opt-in funding source like the Patriot Fund aligns with the ideology of universal contributions outlined in the Steward of the Common Good.

Another, more direct public financing option – and one that gets closer to the ideals of direct democracy – would be a system like the one envisioned by Harvard Law School’s Lawrence Lessig and Yale Law School’s Bruce Ackerman. We should undermine Congressional dependence on a select few big donors and foster dependence on a large number of small donations by creating a publically funded system that would entitle every citizen to a \$50 “democracy voucher” that could be donated to the campaign of any Congressperson

who agrees to only accept democracy vouchers and individual donations up to \$100.

Finally, we must make public funding more attractive by lowering the costs of integral campaign expenses (such as advertising and media) for candidates who accept only public funding. This involves requiring television and radio stations to open five and ten minute time slots daily for candidates or incentivizing certain large websites to provide advertisement space.

The Big Idea 2: Changing the Game

To enhance our democracy and protect our electoral process, we should amend the Constitution to change current Supreme Court doctrine and allow for caps on the amount of spending in a campaign.

A survey conducted by the National Voting Rights Institute revealed, “87 percent of voters support caps on campaign spending as a way of improving the fairness, honesty and integrity of elections.”⁴⁷ Well-developed democracies around the world use spending caps, such as \$28 million per party in the U.K.⁴⁸ While this does not guarantee freedom from corruption or an equal playing field, it is a major step forward. Individual states and cities have also experimented with spending limits. For example, when Albuquerque introduced spending limits to facilitate more competitive elections, it garnered greater voter turnout, reduced the role of large donors, and diversified the range of candidates – all without limiting a candidate’s ability to run an effective campaign.⁴⁹ Spending limits should be set on a per-voter basis to allow for the differing needs and expenses of different campaigns based on previously existing voluntary spending limits or marked against actual spending in comparison to past elections. Candidates for the House of Representatives and the Senate should have spending capped



at \$3 per potential voter, and candidates for president should have spending capped at \$4 per voter.⁵⁰ These limits would prevent campaign costs from escalating, reduce the burden of fundraising, and ensure that candidates focus on engaging with citizens and important issues.

Current doctrine fails to address a core problem with our democracy: While all citizens have an equal right to free speech, not everyone has equal access to money, which at present greatly distorts whose voice is heard. Given that the Supreme court, in the 2010 *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling and the 1974 *Buckley v. Valeo*⁵¹ ruling, has disagreed with this fundamental premise, we call for an amendment to grant Congress power over issues of campaign finance.⁵² This would, in turn, allow for Congress to both institute the spending caps described above and regulate the spending of Super PACs in a complete way without addressing the larger issues of the First Amendment. Such a change would be a crucial step toward establishing fairer limits on campaign spending and donations for both wealthy individuals and corporations and would return our democracy to a place where every individual had a more equal voice in our democracy.

*HOW CAN WE DECREASE REPRESENTATIVES'
DEPENDENCE ON SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS?
THE CHALLENGE: FINANCING THE PURSUIT OF
THE BEST - NOT MOST ACCESSIBLE - IDEA*

The power of lobbyists in our system is three fold: legislators depend on lobbyists to give them information while in office, they are important for fundraising for re-election, and legislatures want to keep open the option of a future job on K-Street. Because legislative offices have limited staff and limited time, lobbyists currently act as a “legislative subsidy,” helping legislators develop, understand, and pursue particular policies by writing bills and speeches for them, conducting research, and providing legislative intelligence.⁵³ The problem is that many lobbyists work on behalf of wealthy corporations, while most social interest groups simply do not have the money to promote their ideas in government in any comparable way.

Furthermore, the lobbying system is part of the revolving door. Legislators and legislative staff members frequently put in a few years on the Hill and then find well-paying work on K Street.

Indeed, experience working on the Hill is such a valuable asset that a recent study found a 24 percent revenue premium was being awarded to lobbyists who lobby their old offices.⁵⁵

Effective lobbying reform would address this harmful dependence in three ways. Firstly, we should increase Congressional office budgets to include a legislative consulting fund so that Congressional offices can hire experts to assist in writing legislation, rather than outside groups bankrolling preferential legislation. Secondly, we must demand more transparency in who is actually lobbying: Currently, anyone spending less than 20 percent of their time lobbying or does not directly lobby is not required to register as a lobbyist. Third, we must disincentivize the revolving door by making former members of Congress or Congressional employees who go to work for a lobbying firm within five years of leaving their positions

*/ FIFTY-TWO
PERCENT OF
CONGRESS
MEMBERS
DEFEATED
IN THE 2010
ELECTIONS
NOW WORK AS
LOBBYISTS^{54/}*

ineligible for their federal retirement benefits. We support a specific bill, H.R. 4030: Stop the Revolving Door in Washington Act, which proposes to do just that.

Seven in ten Americans think special interest groups have too much influence on American life and politics, while 85 percent think they themselves have too little. While this influence must be limited, simply adding transparency to the process will improve people’s perceptions of government. Yet the result of the Citizens United v FEC and Speechnow.org v FEC Supreme Court decisions has been that corporations have been granted the right, in the name of the First Amendment, to spend unlimited sums to influence the outcome of elections, through SuperPACs and other organizations that are nominally independent of candidates and parties.

The disclosure laws surrounding contributions demand overhaul. One part of this issue is that corporations can donate money without notifying key stakeholders. Another part of the issue is that in order to circumvent disclosure laws, contributions are increasingly being funneled through 501(c)4s. Since under IRS guidelines 501(c)4s are non-taxed social welfare nonprofits, they are not legally obliged to disclose their donors, even when they run political ads directly advocating for the election or defeat of a candidate.⁵⁶ The IRS should enforce the law already on the books that says that 501(c)4s cannot have politics as their “primary purpose,” which would force many political spenders to identify as the Super PACs that they actually are. This in turn would allow us to safeguard the accountability of our system by implementing laws that require all shareholders of a company to be notified of a



company contribution to any and all political campaigns, including Super PACs, and donations to PACs that participate in political activity. This will encourage more participation in social welfare activities and less in political activities from 501c4s.

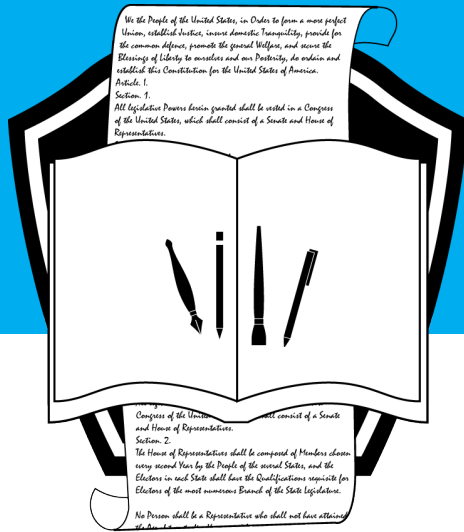
The core ideas of democratic debate that underpin our system will be at risk as long as corporations are allowed to dump unregulated amounts of money into political advertisements. This creates a system with no incentive for politicians to represent the people's best interests.



Student Highlight: Marlena Luhr,

a political science student in American University's School of Public Affairs, has been working to get constituents involved in the political process and help ensure that our democracy stays representative. Running a Citizens United awareness campaign that reached 14 schools across the country, petitioning the White House, and leading a group of students at American University in creating a proposal for campaign finance reform on a more broad scale, Marlena has tackled Money in Politics from many angles. Moving forward, she hopes to encourage more small donors in campaigns and work on incentivizing the public financing option for candidates running for public office.

ENGAGEMENT (V):
the state of being in gear.
CITIZEN (N):
An active participant in a democracy.



GOVERNMENT AS IT ENGAGES CITIZENS

VISION

Ensuring a successful, genuinely democratic society is not just the responsibility of elected officials and government institutions. While democratic government represents the will of the people, it must also be maintained and fortified *by the people*. In an ideal democracy, citizens actively vote but also maintain a critical interest in the actions of the representatives they elect. These citizens ensure that democracy is a part of everyday life; they look beyond their individual wants and needs and ask whether the government they've helped elect represents the greater good, whether it fulfills its potential, and how it can do better. An effective citizenry is demanding, attentive, and engaged, creating democratic spaces both inside and outside the formal structures of government that demand transparency and act on open information. We believe government can better engage citizens by:

- 1) Providing access to civic and political education,
- 2) Encouraging productive and informed political participation, and
- 3) Expanding access to democratic spaces.

PROVIDE ACCESS TO CIVIC AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

We rely on an educated citizenry to drive our democracy. Yet the ways we educate citizens are not always in line with the crucial role we ask people to play. In an age of overwhelming information flow and access, we believe investing in formal education can be vital in creating a citizenry able to think critically about the purposes, challenges, and triumphs of democratic government.

WHO'S 'TRAINED' TO BE A CITIZEN?

THE CHALLENGE: DECLINING INVESTMENT IN CIVICS EDUCATION

Our public education system should ensure that students become successful, productive members of society, not just successful test takers. We should be investing in education as one of the key drivers of social and economic opportunity in this country, as well in the process of giving students the tools to be good citizens. We should take every opportunity to teach about the potential benefits of civic engagement and to encourage students to be critical of, but not apathetic to, our political system. Educating with engagement in mind should not, however, be limited to instruction on how government works. Rather, it should foster each student's ability to be part of the democratic system by ensuring that everyone leaves the public school system with both a strong grasp of academics and experience with the democratic process. The goal of public education should be to prepare students to be citizens, and the best way to do this is by encouraging hands-on work within the democratic process in conjunction with formal academic preparation.

As proven by the success of democratically minded charter schools, such as New York City's Democracy Prep, refocusing curriculums to encourage

democratic values and civic engagement improves performance on standardized evaluations while also encouraging students and teachers to engage with a diverse range of learning and teaching methods.

Despite the school's non-traditional approach, the schools have still remained successful on standardized testing in comparison to other schools in the same area.⁵⁷ Democracy Prep's success proves that schools with progressive, inventive curriculums can meet national educational standards while also encouraging civic engagement and promoting democratic values. To encourage non-charter schools to adopt similarly creative teaching methods, the Department of Education can offer funding subsidies to those that propose engagement-driven service learning programming.

ENCOURAGE PRODUCTIVE AND INFORMED POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

To build an informed and powerful citizenry, we have to invest in civics education that continues even after we leave the classroom. In today's complex media environment, it is not enough for our public institutions to be open and transparent (a top value identified by participants). The medium by which they receive the information also plays a critical role in shaping civic knowledge. For most Americans, it is increasingly easy to access up-to-date news and political information, but the benefits of access decrease if it is impossible to decipher the validity or objectivity of a news source. To help citizens be part of important discussions, we must examine our major media institutions while also investing in a life-long commitment to civics education to ensure that our citizens are equipped with the necessary tools to analyze the conflicting perspectives provided by competing news sources.

HOW DO WE ENSURE TRANSPARENT AND BALANCED INFORMATION?

THE CHALLENGE: STRENGTHENING MEDIA LITERACY

With the proliferation of political blogs, news aggregation sites, and cable news networks, accessing political information today is arguably easier than ever. But the ability to find and consume information is not enough



to encourage productive and informed political participation. We must equip our citizens with the ability to effectively analyze this information as well. By advocating for strong media literacy education and access to platforms that provide critical information about news sources, we can foster more constructive political discourse and participation.

In an age in which 85 percent of American teenagers say they utilize and learn from new media at least occasionally, teaching and emphasizing media literacy along with traditional literacy programs could dramatically change the way Americans consume media.⁵⁸ In the United States, the combination of a 24-hour news cycle, partisan cable news networks, and the proliferation of political blogs has created an environment ripe for information overload. In light of this environment, it is crucial that media literacy become a part of the core curriculum in K-12 schools.

Researchers have found that in addition to improving the ability to analyze the validity and intended audiences of news articles and video clips, teaching through new media also improves student motivation to engage with traditional literacy studies and engagement with media production improves basic reading comprehension and writing skills.⁵⁹ These improvements in motivation and skill were the result of about six months of exposure to new media learning, which included activities such as listening to, writing, editing, and producing radio broadcasts and webcasts about a variety of current events topics.⁶⁰

The results indicate the potential success of media-based education in improving students' abilities to analyze the validity and quality of various information sources.⁶¹ In light of such evidence, the Department of Education should provide schools with funding to improve or add media literacy courses to their curriculums. By introducing new media learning techniques such as the production of video blogs and radio broadcasts, educators can improve core literacy skills while also preparing students to combat the negative effects of information overload in the new media age.

MediaMeter: According to a 2009 study, Americans spend an average of 12 hours per day consuming information through media.⁶² While an informed citizenry is critical to productive democratic engagement,

not every available news outlet provides quality, objective information. Additionally, many of the most popular news sources are controlled by just five major media corporations, resulting in a lack of diversity in readily available information and perspectives. In order to best use the available information, government agencies such as the National Endowment for the Humanities should provide funding and resources to projects such as "MediaMeter," a recent initiative from the MIT Center for Civic Media, which aims to help consumers track and analyze the types of media they consume.⁶³

The MIT project will provide users with visual and statistical breakdowns of their media usage. The platform will analyze how much of a user's information comes from reliable sources with citations and expert analysis and how much information comes from non-subjective sources without factual support. If expanded to its fullest potential, a program like MediaMeter could help citizens critically evaluate their news by also providing information about a source's known corporate or political affiliations and grading major news outlets based on the objective quality of their information and analysis.

A program like MediaMeter cannot ensure that every citizen's news consumption is balanced and informed, but it can help manage information overload and support media literacy. The quality of our democratic discourse can only be improved if citizens are encouraged to explore their news sources with a critical eye and make informed decisions about the information they consume.

EXPAND ACCESS TO DEMOCRATIC SPACES

The goal of democratic spaces is simple: as another example of an enduring commitment to robust civics education, they should encourage all citizens, regardless of background, to meaningfully engage with political life and participate in the democratic process. Yet the reality of creating and keeping up democratic spaces is anything but simple. While we do not believe that the creation of democratic spaces needs to come solely from, nor be the exclusive purview of, government, it must have an interest in ensuring that the people it serves are able to actively engage with it, to question it, and to appreciate it. Without an

active and engaged citizenry, democracy cannot fulfill its potential – but without concrete and fruitful methods for engaging, citizens will continue to tune out.

CAN MORE DEMOCRATIC SPACES PRODUCE A MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT?

THE CHALLENGE: INVESTMENT IN PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

The number of democratic spaces is dwindling. Citizens are increasingly treated as passive customers with wants to be satiated, as opposed to active members of a political community. The citizen's role has become subsumed by either the market or government technocrats. This is extremely problematic given the huge potential for citizens to have a concrete stake in government and direct engagement with those processes, laws, and institutions that shape their lives.

There is a very real potential for government to create and maintain transparent democratic spaces that act as sites for collective self-determination and political education, as highlighted in the works of Dr.

Carmen Sirianni at Brandeis University. One example of how this can manifest is the Neighborhood Planning Program established in Seattle in the 1990s.⁶⁴ The program provided city funds to neighborhood residents and groups for a broad range of improvement projects. These funds required groups to match the city's grant with in-kind contributions, money, or labor and demanded that citizens, in partnership with city staff, be responsible for the design and implementation of projects. In addition to funds, the city government also provided citizens with planning tools, appointed project managers as “intermediaries of trust,” implemented an accountability framework, and created and facilitated inclusive democratic forums. Not only was this program successful in quantitative terms, completing more than 3,800 neighborhood projects by 2011 through more than half a million hours of public work by citizens, it also provided important opportunities for citizens to exercise political power and practice and learn the demands of democracy.

By introducing a bill that would work through AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), we can replicate SNPP's success. The bill would fund 5,000 paid positions (with room for expansion)

STUDENT HIGHLIGHT : DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

The ability to create democratic spaces is not exclusive to government agencies and officials; this document, and the process of its creation, is strong evidence of the ability of the people to create democratic spaces for themselves. Three students, Elizabeth Stokes, Jean-Ann Kubler, and Ryan Dahrouge, developed the Government By and For Millennial America programming during their summer fellowships at the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network. With the overall goal of evaluating the role of government in democratic life, these students generated a workshop that allowed participants to talk about democracy while engaging in the democratic process—effectively creating a microcosm of the very system they sought to examine.



as part of the NCCC to identify communities and local government organizations that would benefit from Seattle's model. This would also involve deciding which aspects and processes of local government citizens could feasibly and meaningfully get involved in, including anything from neighborhood planning to community policing programs. In addition, the bill would fund a minimum of ten project managers per community through the NCCC, whose roles it would be to build capacity among citizen groups, ensure a deliberative, democratic, and mutually accountable process, and liaise between citizens and government. In order to support project managers, the bill would also provide citizen toolboxes for each community, which include the requisite financial, data, programmatic, and process tools needed to complete projects.

WHO GETS INVITED TO BE A CITIZEN?

THE CHALLENGE: PUBLIC ACCESS TO BOARD MEETINGS

To encourage citizen participation and accountability, government departments such as the Board of Education (BOE) should have a level of transparency that encourages any and all people within the applicable district to attend meetings. Currently, there is no overarching legislation that guarantees access to these meetings. The current system allows for situations where meetings that affect the public directly may not be well publicized or have the dates and times changed at the last minute in efforts to prevent attendance.

Legislation should require government entities to host a certain number of public board meetings per year, allowing time for the public to air grievances or concerns.⁶⁵ The BOE would still be allowed private meetings and closed sessions, but all decisions would be communicated to the community⁶⁶ along with the information or analysis being used in the decision making process. The information should be easily available for those who are unable to attend but wish to see it via a newsletter and web access. But information only is not enough. The community should have a method to reform or amend a decision if it disagrees with it. Ensuring this transparency and access is imperative to the rights of the people. Rewarding districts that already provide fair access to the public, and incentivizing those that do not, is a critical step in fostering citizen engagement with government organizations.



CAN AVERAGE CITIZENS HANDLE THE COMPLEX RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENT?

THE CHALLENGE: MATCHING PRIORITIES TO FUNDING

To encourage active and engaged participation, local governments must help create the positive feedback loop of citizens feeling directly empowered to make a difference in their communities. The ideal way to promote active engagement is by allowing people to have an active voice in the decisions that affect them most—namely, how their representatives distribute funding for local projects. Participatory budgeting is a process that gives municipalities control and discretion over portions of the budget through direct democracy. **The practice is used in over 3,000 cities across the globe, including Chicago and New York City.** In 2012, city council members in New York City launched a pilot program for participatory budgeting. Four council members volunteered a portion of their discretionary spending funds to be under the control of their constituents. These council members were able to increase engagement and political participation in their districts.

The New York City model can be expanded through legislation demanding that every state develop a participatory budgeting program requiring

that the use of at least 5 percent of each municipality's discretionary funds be decided through direct public votes. Doing so would promote engagement as well as democratic values, allowing for local government spending to truly reflect the desires of the people and encouraging citizen investment in the political process.

HOW CAN I TALK TO MY REPRESENTATIVES?

THE CHALLENGE: ONLINE TOWN HALLS: STUDENT STUDY



For many citizens, time is a fundamental obstacle to democratic engagement. Many of the most politically underrepresented groups do not have the time or resources to directly engage with their representatives by attending town hall meetings (like the BOE example above) or making appointments to speak to politicians directly. In order to help engage citizens with fewer resources, a more accessible option for engagement

should be implemented and the Internet could provide the connector to make our representatives more available and accessible to every citizen they represent.

While an example like MyMaryland.net is currently a pilot exclusively in Maryland, its model can easily and cost-effectively be adapted to all 50 states if each congressman pledges a small percentage (around 10 percent) of their outreach budget to contribute to funding the project. The collected money could then be pooled in each state and offered to the third-party organization that proposes the best variation on MyMaryland's model. Expanding the model would allow representatives to be responsive to the needs of larger portions of their constituencies—not just voters with enough free time to attend town hall meetings—and help voters to hold their representatives more accountable, effectively improving the quality and efficiency of political participation.

Student Highlight: Ben Simon and MyMaryland.net

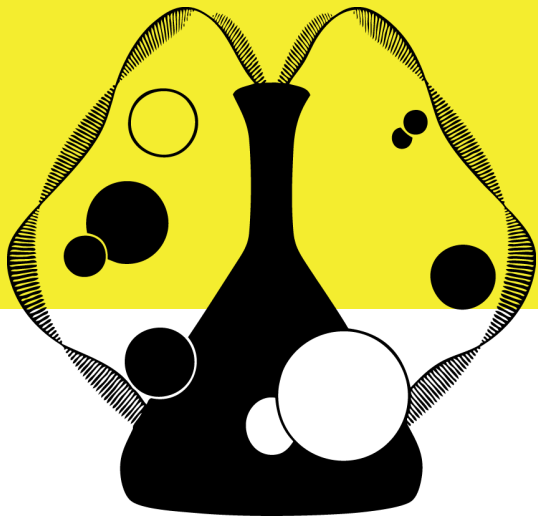
Many students take the time to go meet their representative or spend a day lobbying on the Hill. Ben Simon, a senior at the University of Maryland-College Park, took the question of calling his Congressman a few steps further when he founded MyMaryland.net, which brings verified voters and their elected officials together in democracy's first ever 24/7 online town hall.

MyMaryland.net leverages the Internet to lower the costs of participation for the average person by making it easy for voters to make their voices heard on the issues they care about. Citizens can ask questions and exchange ideas with their officials at the local, state, and federal levels. They can also see information about the officials, from campaign finance information to sponsored bills and recent key votes, all of which streams onto the site. And communication can be two-way: officials can poll their districts to gather real time input from constituents.



INNOVATION (N):

the quest to create something original, to enhance what already exists, to tackle old problems with new, more effective solutions.



GOVERNMENT AS INNOVATOR

VISION

To many Americans, innovation is what happens in the competitive marketplace. But is innovation really only confined to the private sphere? Government entities are constantly generating new technologies that are not only successful but also socially “good.” From the Space Race to more recent DARPA-funded discoveries, government has produced countless additions to our economy and society. More than a source of new commercial ideas, though, the government innovates in various and profound ways. By improving citizen services or using data to better target resources, governments improve how they positively affect Americans’ lives. Through legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Voting Rights Act, government innovates on the idea of citizenship and civil rights. **Most importantly, successful innovation cannot come exclusively from corporations. It must also come from engaging the network of actors in our society, including our neighbors, our teachers, our voluntary associations, our businesses, and, most significantly, our government.** We believe government can best serve as an innovator by:

1. Innovating how government works,
2. Incubating innovative ideas that drive America’s competitiveness,
3. Charting the course for inclusion, equity, and civil rights.

INNOVATE HOW GOVERNMENT WORKS

In an era of tremendous change and opportunity, government needs to be nimble and innovative in its own functions. However, the perception today is that government is far from that noble goal, typified as inefficient and unresponsive. Updating its service processes and making them open to the public are necessary for building support for the work of government in the future.

The Big Idea: Beyond an Income-Based Poverty Measurement



Our severely outdated federal poverty line and federal minimum wage are only two examples of a much larger societal trend of using metrics that are unable to gauge what it means to live a valuable and meaningful life. Over the past decade, there has been tepid job growth, median family income has declined, the effects of global warming and poverty are on the rise, and the country's health gains have either stalled or regressed. Despite all this, Gross Domestic Product has risen nearly 18 percent. Although GDP has become a proxy for the broader welfare and progress of society, with all economic debate and policy centered on maximizing GDP, it is clear that GDP obscures essential aspects of the common good and thus limits how we identify and address complex challenges in society today.

To truly examine how we address poverty, we should revisit not only how we calculate the problem, but also how we define it. Currently, we examine poverty through the lens of expenses. Changing that system to one that benchmarks poverty levels off of a percentage of median income - many European countries use 60 percent of average income as a cut off point⁶⁸ - would be a good improvement on our current system. However, to fully move beyond the monolithic focus on money spawned by a GDP-driven bottom line, we must include other, more holistic measurements when evaluating the well being of our citizens. These sorts of measures - like the Gini coefficient, persistent at-risk-of-poverty rate, and persons with low educational attainment rate - look at the health of individuals, the nature of their neighborhoods, the cohesion of immigrant communities within the rest of society, public goods and services, and education and human capital.⁶⁹ A more innovative and holistic framework that combines many of these sorts of ratings can motivate and target significant policy changes in areas that are crucial for the common good. By using these sorts of metrics to define our collective achievement, we might see two types of changes to poverty policy. First, we would concentrate on causes, not just on symptoms. And secondly, we would have a far broader range of issues from which to attack poverty beyond simply defining the poor in relation to their current access to money.

HOW DO WE USE METRICS TO INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS? THE CHALLENGE: REFORMING THE POVERTY LINE



Government at all levels uses the federal poverty line in determining eligibility for a host of assistance programs. The line is also a marker of how our society is assuring that citizens are guaranteed a certain level of well being. The problem is that the poverty line, as it currently stands, is a poor metric for really capturing the nature of poverty and the true number of low-income individuals. In 1963, the Social Security Administration defined the poverty line as three times a family's minimum food budget.⁶⁹ However, food has become a smaller and smaller part of poor families' budgets. Today's low-income families have additional expenses, particularly in the area of housing and transportation, that the poverty line fails to take into account. Most importantly, the current poverty line has failed to be responsive to policies implemented to reduce poverty. To resolve the issue of poverty, we need a poverty line that is realistic, modern, and responsive.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) has proposed an imperfect, but much improved, poverty line that takes into account a number of factors that affect the livelihood of the poor. The NAS line is notable for the number of variables it considers and its ability to deal with poor individuals who have different experiences and come from different regions of the United States. The basic line is set at the 30 to 35th percentile of family costs.⁷⁰ It takes into account costs for food, housing, and clothing, with 10 to 15 percent added

on. These thresholds vary geographically, taking into account the reality that \$10,000 in San Francisco, California is very different from \$10,000 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The NAS line counts in-kind benefits that pay for personal needs, such as food stamps, but does not count costs like medical benefits. Because of its specificity and flexibility, the NAS line would offer a more realistic poverty line.⁷¹

HOW DO WE IMPROVE THE PROCESS BY WHICH GOVERNMENT PROVIDES A SERVICE? THE CHALLENGE: TRAINING, DATA, AND NEW TOOLS FOR SERVICE ENGAGEMENT



Government agencies are notoriously poor at providing services in an efficient, friendly, and reliable manner. Two agencies with which individuals often interact the most, the U.S. Postal Service and the state-level Department of Motor Vehicles, serve as prime examples of bureaucracies that seem difficult and behind the times. A number of initiatives and ideas highlight a way forward. In 2004, Montgomery County, MD successfully integrated social service provision in the largest branch of its Department of Health and Human Services. It hired TANF recipients, many of whom had previous experience soliciting assistance from the office, as customer service representatives. These representatives handled the intake of HHS customers and were specially trained to focus on providing an enjoyable customer experience.⁷²

The creation of positions that are entirely focused on improving experiences and advocating for the customer reduces the burden on other frontline staff and improves customer satisfaction. Service providers at the local level could be funded to employ customer service representatives who focus solely on making customers' trips to the agency efficient and successful. One of the best mechanisms for promoting a customer service culture is to provide incentives. Employee benefits and

wages should be restructured to reward those who provide service in a courteous and efficient manner. Finding a way to measure and then change the direction of customer service in the public sector in this way is vital. If government service provision continues to be poor, it reflects poorly on the rest of the operations of the government, even those that are farther from the public eye.

Additionally, government can rethink and scale how it responds to data on civic problems in the pursuit of better service. All levels of government can and should become smarter by taking the data that comes from constituents and from their agencies and turning it into action. By taking data on all sorts of issues, from transportation to housing conditions, governments can analyze it and figure out the right place to put a police cruiser or a school. Using data better to make more rational,

Community Highlight: SeeClickFix



Potholes, broken streetlights, and streets desperately in need of bike lanes. In every community, a local government is charged with improving citizens' quality of life by providing public works. In those same communities, local citizens tend to see problems before government officials can. Government can improve residents' satisfaction by handling these problems quickly. But how do they find out about them? At least two potential means of better communication have emerged in the past few years. The high-tech option is exemplified by the tech startup SeeClickFix, based in New Haven, CT. Residents can report on local problems on SeeClickFix's website. Governments that sign up with SeeClickFix then see the concerns, and the appropriate agency can add fixing that problem to its work schedule while also publicly acknowledging the problem. SeeClickFix's public forum allows other residents with similar concerns to add support to a solution and to post their own experiences. On the lower-tech end, local 311 services allow for a single call center for all questions, concerns, and requests to local governments with an easy to remember number.

cost-effective solutions is a key way that the government can innovate.

For example, the New Haven Police Department, under Chief Dean Esserman, offers a strong example of data-driven community policy. In “CompStat” or comparative statistics meetings, the entire department leadership team sits down and evaluates the past week of crime. Representatives from each of New Haven’s ten policing districts report their crime rates and identify any potential patterns. Different leaders with different responsibilities—from district managers to drug taskforce members—then coordinate on how they will reduce crime in the next few weeks. Probation and parole officers also actively participate in CompStat meetings, allowing law enforcement officials to tackle criminal justice issues from varied and diverse view points and offer balanced perspectives on how to reduce crime.⁷³

Crowdsourcing is an essential part of this sort of collaborative and rational government, and it can be improved. Any department that provides open data should also set aside employees to work directly with the public toward active implementation and reflective critique. When ideas are implemented, however, there often tends to be a homogenization or bureaucratization of processes so that they resemble existing one. Moreover, when government adopts innovations reactively,

existing structures, dominant values, and power relationships are maintained at the cost of unconventional solutions. Instead, open data and its resulting products should be embraced and used proactively by governments at all levels.

There should be a clear way for a citizen-designed app to become officially sanctioned and used. For open data to work, we need a truly open government that begins to embrace the contributions of outsiders. Take, for example, the innovative monitoring in public transport systems used by the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) when it launched Idea Factory in April 2007. Using a secure intranet, the TSA accepted employee ideas for improving agency operations, which led to dozens of major policy changes by the end of January 2009.⁷⁴ Good ideas kept being submitted because previous ideas were being implemented, creating a positive environment that encouraged more submissions.

INCUBATING INNOVATIVE IDEAS

Government has, is, and should continue to be an important way to develop technologies and ideas that might not be developed in the private sector. While potential profitability is one way to choose which ideas are funded, this leaves two major holes for government to fill: basic research without a direct application and applied research that has a social good but not necessarily a profitable bottom line. In the 1960s, what company would have found it profitable to explore the moon? The United States leads the world in academic output of papers and research and ranks among the top in the world for diversity on campus and resources available to institutions. Our universities are international hubs for innovation, teaching students new perspectives and worldviews, discovering technologies, and designing social programs to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. The production of this knowledge does not always make it into annual GDP counts, but it is our most valuable natural resource—our intellectual capital. To build on this crucial asset, we need to improve how we fund scientific research and better support ideas as they move from discovery to market.



HOW DO WE INVEST IN AMERICA'S COMPETITIVENESS?

THE CHALLENGE: CREATIVE INCENTIVES FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Innovation is a costly process. State and local governments have previously supported the development of research parks through tax incentives for firms and investors. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development created a program that gives tax credits to angel investors, wealthy individuals who decide to support an enterprise in its early stage in exchange for some level of ownership. Since the start of the program, \$60 million in tax credits have been provided to those who have supported science and technology.

By providing tax incentives on both the investments in science and technology and the work done by science and technology firms, governments can incentivize the development of research parks and high-tech investment.⁷⁵ One strength a jurisdiction can draw on is its ability to support innovation activities through independent organizations that specialize in catalyzing economic development, attracting investment, and providing non-monetary assistance to firms. These organizations often fund themselves through special taxing models. For example, the Kansas Bioscience Authority is funded through a statewide tax increment financing scheme that raised \$581 million over 15 years. The economic impact has been tremendous. For every dollar invested by the Kansas Bioscience Authority, \$9.41 has been pumped into Kansas's economy. These economic returns have led to 1,195 new jobs in the state.⁷⁶ By expanding these models, we can see the benefits of innovation in communities across the country.

HOW DO WE FIND A CURE FOR CANCER?

THE CHALLENGE: NON-COMMERCIAL DISCOVERIES



When it comes to the issue of commercializing innovation, these solutions point to a vision of government as an incubator, shepherding the great ideas of the academy to profitability in the private sector. Where the government can play a hugely significant role in addition to the funding of basic research is by supporting innovation earlier in the development process. Government funding ought not to crowd out the private sector once we know an idea will work and will make money. Rather,



government's role is to take ideas that have achieved an initial test in the lab and be able to judiciously but generously support them. Few private investors are going to support unprofitable research and development. Thus, it is the role of government to fill that gap.

There are two methods for changing the nature of how research is conducted. Method one would be establishing a cross-discipline incubator. The isolation of separate research fields into independent "smoke stacks" is detrimental to the overall productivity of basic and applied sciences and limits the expansion of all research efforts. An idea incubator in which top researchers in a variety of basic research fields would gather to innovate their way through current blockades and bottlenecks in research and application efficacy would allow for perpetual new perspectives to be brought to bear on questions that are stumping individuals.

An idea incubator would not only stimulate productivity, but it would also promote the cross-pollination of knowledge and a greater application of differing skill sets and perspectives. Members of the incubator should receive a substantial government grant to incentivize participation and to help prevent conflicts based on obtaining grants and other

funding sources. They should also receive access to other professionals in the applicable industry assembled by the government. While a member would maintain control of her own work, general research and knowledge generated by these grantees would also be available for future generations that won the award, creating a bank of data and ideas for others to build off and pursue.

We need a shift in the ethos of funding scientific and medical research. Not only would the plans listed here bring a greater focus to the common good and the greatest possible impact of new inventions and discoveries, it would also maintain society's commitment to supporting the intellectual questioning of many research projects through a transparent and effective system.

CHARTING THE COURSE FOR INCLUSION, EQUITY, AND CIVIL RIGHTS

It's fair to argue that the Founders set up the American system of democratic governance to guard against rash decision-making or political earthquakes. Their charge, according to James Madison, was the maintenance of stability, safety, and the rule of law. It might come as no surprise, then, that today's government often finds itself unable to act as quickly or responsively as many would hope. However, as we consider this generation's prioritization of equity and our country's deep commitment and responsibility to our rights, freedoms, and equal treatment under the law, there is a clarion call for government to be at the forefront – an innovator – in our pursuit of social progress.

HOW DO OUR SYSTEMS EMBRACE – AND ENCOURAGE – OUR COUNTRY'S GROWING DIVERSITY?



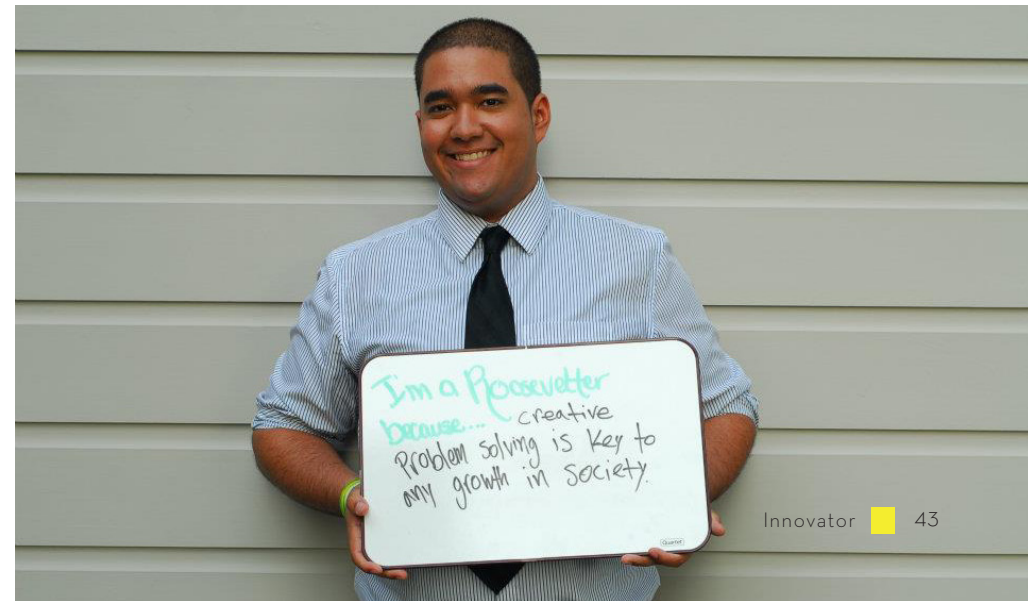
THE CHALLENGE: STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Rather than focus on the equality of outcomes or opportunity as the sole indicator of social progress, we argue that the true mark of a just society is the fairness with which these opportunities, disadvantages, and privileges are allocated and distributed throughout society. Thus,

additional consideration ought to be given to more structural efforts to examine social problems and inequalities: What resources are available to the disadvantaged? Who is and is not taking advantage of these opportunities and for what reasons? The best way to pursue an equitable solution to the challenges we face collectively is to work to change the pathways of opportunity that lead certain types of individuals to positions of power and authority while largely excluding the traditionally marginalized.

We should expand programs that work. For instance, we should continue to support President Obama's Presidential Management Fellow Program. Designed to bring recent advanced degree graduates into public service, the fellowship offers educational resources, loan forgiveness, and generous compensation to a wide variety of individuals seeking executive branch experience.

Additionally, we ought to engage new constituencies in ways that go beyond tokenizing their experience and which seek to engage them in agenda-setting work. In this vein, we ought to work with, for example, the National Association for Youth Courts to use its proven method of reducing adolescent recidivism in shaping the criminal justice policies and treatment programs that they know so well. Instead of simply entrusting the status quo to a diverse group of spokespeople, an innovative government would listen to those voices and implement their unique ideas.



NEXT STEPS

How do we move these ideas and concepts beyond what's laid out here?
Providing a vision is only the first step to catalyzing real change.

Through our experiences over the last eight years, the Campus Network has learned how to effectively create change. We have experimented with different models of activism, from academic articles to analyzing hot-button national political issues, and we have found that designing policy solutions with community participation is the most effective and most representative of our values. We call this grassroots, sleeves-rolled-up approach to policy activism Think Impact. As our chapters across the country participate in Think Impact, they engage with community members, local nonprofits, and elected officials from school boards to state legislatures and write unique policy solutions tailored to the needs of their communities.⁷⁷ If we truly believe that government is of, by, and for Millennial America, **then this approach to policy change is how we can design concrete solutions, elevate our voices, and build a movement toward a government for the 21st century.**

Over the course of the next year, the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network will use the *Government By and For Millennial America* document as a launching point to empower young people to identify and tackle our challenges in pursuit of a more inclusive and effective government.

Join us. Let's get started.

1. Join a Roosevelt Chapter

- Visit our website
- Find a chapter on your campus
- Contact us @VivaRoosevelt
- Meet your regional staff and chapter head

2. Start a Roosevelt Chapter

- No chapter on campus?
- Email campus.network@rooseveltinstitute.org
- Meet your regional coordinator
- Get start-up materials and launch

3. Run a *Government By and For Millennial America* Conversation

- Visit <http://www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org/govbyandfor>
- Click 'Get Started'
- Want tips and support? Email us!
- Bring together your campus and community

4. Build a 21st Century Government

- Visit <http://www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org/govbyandfor>
- Click 'Get Started'
- Identify your issue, priority, and the change you can create
- Design the change
- Get grants, training, and support (Email us!)
- Change the world

CONCLUSION: FROM THE AUTHORS

Edmund Burke once wrote, “It is easier to change an administration than it is to reform a people.” This idea, that changing government is easier than changing people, is one that flies in the face of how we see government. Our administration and those in positions of political power ought not be understood as apart from the people, but rather of the people.

Isn't it a more important, albeit more difficult, project to abandon our current process as vested in the hands of the few, closed to new and original ideas, and stuck in a rut of political stasis? Can't we, if only incrementally, work for the realization of something different? We see the new America as a place of communication, discourse, and more open-sourced collaboration, a place that values and celebrates a variety of lived experiences as they contribute to the fight for justice and a more inclusive collective.

Our hope is that *Government By and For Millennial America* contributes to the notion that government is so much more than a static menu of poor options, catering to self-interested consumers instead of to citizens. **We have the long-term vision to engage in substantive discussions on the role of government as it relates to individuals and society.** These discussions move away from the binary of “big” and “small” government toward a nuanced evaluation of a government that works for its people, responds to its people's needs, and seeks to understand them in all of their differences. **Such a government at once sees the micro problem, the larger picture, and the interconnections between them, responding in a way that is consistent with the four pillars that govern its actions.** Although we know that we have not been entirely holistic, that all the holes in the ship of state would not be patched even if everything in *Government By and For Millennial America* were to be implemented tomorrow, we have made a substantive start.

For example, our vision of higher education shows that when the system works well, it not only involves all pillars of government, but it brings

about profound social good. When government fulfills its role as steward of the common good, education is affordable for many, giving them the opportunity to earn a decent living and a true chance at social mobility. When government engages citizens well, not only do they understand the systems that govern their lives, but students can be empowered to guide universities in a way that represents their interests and aspirations.

When government enacts legislation that improves patents, an open exchange can take place in the university. And as ideas sprout forth from the academy, an innovative government provides the seed funding to take ideas from possibility to profitability. **The different pillars each mandate a distinct yet complementary course of action that contributes to a democratic good for both the individual and society. The problem that our higher education system faces today is that it fails to utilize such a multi-pronged approach,** with the corporatization of education making universities little more than factories for job creation.

Though it is surely difficult to achieve, **government initiatives can think from the perspective of multiple pillars of government.** This will enable it to promote participation, improve laws, enhance rights, and bring about stronger economic futures for us all. Our vision of government embraces this connectivity, and we call on each portion of society and government to play its part in building a stronger collective.

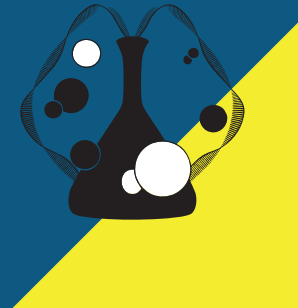
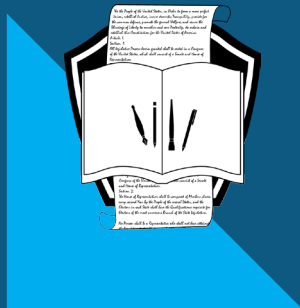


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